DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 082 CS 507 700

AUTHOR Mobley, Donald Graham
TITLE Improving Confidence, Clarity, and Fluency in Public Speaking Skills of Middle School Students through Innovative Instructional Techniques.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 80p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Grade 7; Instructional Innovation; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; *Public Speaking; Self Esteem; Speech Improvement; *Speech Instruction; Speech Skills
IDENTIFIERS Middle School Students

ABSTRACT

A practium study sought to improve the confidence, clarity, and fluency of 115 seventh graders' public speaking skills. Students' public speaking skills were evaluated before and after the practicum by rotating peer review committees of three students each. The first month the practicum focused on self-esteem and a study of the history and diversity of the English language. In the second month, vocal production techniques, nonverbal communication techniques, characteristics of good speakers, and speech organization techniques were emphasized. The third month of implementation focused on students' application of speaking skills in various domains of public speaking (using class discussions, interviews, and storytelling), and on student critiques. During the fourth month, emphasis was placed on speaking to inform, persuade, and entertain. Months 5 and 6 provided time for students to strengthen their oral communication skills as they gained experience in interpretive speaking, debate, and drama. The practicum was concluded in months 7 and 8 with public speaking forums in which students selected their own types of public speaking. Final evaluations showed that the percentage of students: (1) exhibiting self-confidence while speaking to an audience increased from 33% to 88%; (2) clearly articulating and projecting the voice at a suitable rate of speed increased from 37% to 91%; and (3) demonstrating fluency in context, organization, vocabulary, and usage increased from 25% to 82%. (Two tables of data, a list of 72 references, and appendixes containing the speaking evaluation form and a monthly log form are included.) (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED340082

Improving Confidence, Clarity, and Fluency In Public Speaking Skills of Middle School Students Through Innovative Instructional Techniques

by

Donald Graham Mobley

Cluster 31

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1991

AS507700

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Donald G Mobley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

■ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

□ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

T is practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Ann H. Flowers

Ann H. Flowers

Principal, Washington Middle School

1277 M. L. King Ave., Cairo, GA 31728

December 10, 1991

This practicum report was submitted by Donald Graham Mobley under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

Dec. 22, 1991	Wm W. Anderson
Date of Final Approval of Report	William W. Anderson, Ed. D. Adviser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iii
LIST OF TABLES		iv
Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Description of Community, Work Setting, and Writer	1
II	STUDY OF THE PROBLEM	4
	Problem Description	4
	Problem Documentation	5
	Causative Analysis	7
	Relationship of the Problem to the Literature	8
III	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS	16
	Goal and Expectations	16
	Behavioral Objectives	16
	Measurement of Objectives	18
IV	SOLUTION STRATEGY	20
	Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions	20
	Description of Selected Solution	31
	Report of Action Taken	34
V	RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	50
	Results	50
	Conclusions	51
	Recommendations	53
	Dissemination	54
REFERENCES		56
Appendices		
A	PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION EVALUATION FORM	69
B	WRITER'S MONTHLY LOG	71
C	POST PRACTICUM EVALUATION FORM	73

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Initial Public Speaking Traits Shown by Seventh Grade Students	6
2	Students Demonstrating Good or Excellent Speaking Abilities.	51

ABSTRACT

Improving Confidence, Clarity, and Fluency in Public Speaking Skills of Middle School Students through Innovative Instructional Techniques.
Mobley, Donald G., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Oral Communication/Public Speaking/ Speaking Skills/Speech/Intermediate Grades/Middle School/Self-Esteem

This practicum addressed the problem of poor public speaking skills in seventh grade students. Many exhibited uneasiness when speaking to an audience. As a result, their vocal projection was often weak and articulation poor. Many also demonstrated a limited use of vocabulary, while their organizational style rambled. Only one third of the students exhibited self-confidence and clarity in their public speaking, while only one fourth demonstrated an acceptable level of fluency.

Public speaking abilities are important assets to one's personal development in social, economic, and political domains. Therefore, the goal of this practicum was that students in the seventh grade would improve confidence, clarity, and fluency in their public speaking skills. In order to attain this goal, the writer created and implemented a comprehensive program of innovative instructional techniques designed to bolster students' self-confidence as they applied new or improved skills to various relevant situations of oral communication.

The results of the practicum were positive. Students demonstrated significant gains in the effectiveness of their public speaking abilities as they became more adept in various domains of oral communication. The practicum results proved that a consistent program of public speaking skills taught throughout the school year can greatly improve confidence, clarity, and fluency in students' oral communication.

* * * * *

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood, I hereby give permission to Nova University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

December 10, 1991 — Donald G. Mobley

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community, Work Setting, and Writer

The setting for this practicum was a middle school in a small, nonurban school system located in the southeastern United States. The population of the city served by the school is approximately 10,000 people. This city is the government and business center of a county whose population is approximately 21,300 people.

Set amid a diversified agricultural and manufacturing community, the school serves families who depend upon agriculture and business for employment and economic stability. The socioeconomic levels represented by the area's citizens span a gamut from very high to very low. However, many of the families living within the city and county are categorized at varying points between these extremes.

According to the 1990 census, the ethnic distribution of the county was 69.3 percent White and 30.7 percent Black. With an enrollment of 950 students in grades five through eight, the middle school's population of students consisted of 56 percent White and 44 percent Black.

The students involved in this practicum comprised half of the entire seventh grade population of the middle school. Enrolled were 115 children with an age span of 12 to 14 years. Performing on or above grade level in reading were 54 students, while 61 students were below grade level in this domain. Their writing ability as measured by the state's sixth grade criterion-referenced test showed that 9 were very good, 39 were good, 54 were minimal, and 13 were inadequate writers. Of the total number, 61 were male, and 54 were female. The ethnic distribution showed 67 White students and 48 Black students.

Beginning with the 1986-1987 school year, the seventh and eighth grades of the school were reorganized into the middle school concept of education. As a result, each grade level was divided into two equal teams of students. Each team was further divided into four classes in which students were grouped according to reading and math abilities. The students on the teams were taught by four academic teachers in the areas of English, reading, math, and science. These teachers also instructed the four classes in social studies. Some students on the teams received remedial instruction from two additional teachers in the subjects of reading and math.

This writer has spent his ten years of teaching within this school system. After earning a Bachelor's degree

in Vocal Performance, the first four years of his career were spent as a choral director at another school within the system. During these years, he earned his Master's degree in Music Education. Further postgraduate work was done in the area of middle childhood education with a concentration in language arts.

For the past six years, he has been a seventh grade English teacher and Chairman of the English Department for his middle school. While serving as the English teacher for the 115 students involved in this practicum, the writer also taught one class of accelerated social studies students in world geography.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Oral communication is a personal and unique process by which individuals convey thoughts, emotions, and information to others through use of the body's vocal mechanism that has been activated by impulses of the brain. The language development of children begins at an early age and continues for years to come. As children learn to talk, few inhibitions generally exist as the amount and complexity of speech increases. By the time they enter school, informal oral communication patterns are often well-established and continue to be strengthened into the years of middle childhood. At this point in their development, most children are quite comfortable with informal situations of speech. However, only a small number often exhibit development of skills necessary for those situations in which public speaking or performance is required.

As this writer's 115 seventh grade students expressed themselves orally, many exhibited uneasiness in speaking to an audience. As a result, their vocal projection was often weak and articulation poor. Many also demonstrated only a limited use of vocabulary, while their organizational style

rambled.

The process of speaking or performing in public can be an exciting and rewarding experience. However, much of its success depends upon sufficient development of the skills necessary for such endeavors. If the local situation was to be improved, a significant increase was needed in the number of seventh grade students exhibiting confidence while making oral presentations in a clear, organized, and well-articulated manner.

Briefly stated then, the problem was one of poor self-confidence, clarity, and fluency in the public speaking skills of seventh grade students.

Problem Documentation

Throughout the writer's teaching career, he had observed that many middle school students were lacking in their development of the skills necessary for successful oral presentations.

To provide actual evidence of the problem, all students involved in this practicum were first shown how to use the Problem Documentation Evaluation Form (see Appendix A) by evaluating oral presentations given by the writer. Next, each of the 115 students was asked to make an oral presentation about himself or herself and a favorite hobby. In

order to evaluate the level of self-confidence, clarity, and fluency demonstrated in the initial public speaking abilities of these participants, rotating peer review committees of three students utilized the Problem Documentation Evaluation Form to provide data on each speaker. The average of the three scores was recorded as the documentation score for each presentation. The results of these evaluations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Initial Public Speaking Traits Shown by Seventh Grade Students

Trait	No. of Students
Exhibits self-confidence when speaking to an audience	33%
Clearly articulates and projects the voice at a suitable rate of speech	37%
Demonstrates fluency in content, organization, vocabulary, and usage	25%

The observations and evaluations of these student peer review committees provided concrete evidence that a problem

existed in the confidence, clarity, and fluency of public speaking abilities among many of the 115 seventh grade students involved.

Causative Analysis

The problem of students lacking the necessary skills to experience success in giving public oral presentations seemed to have several causes.

One major cause of students' poor self-confidence, clarity, and fluency in their speaking was the lack of consistent classroom instruction in this domain. Although the state curriculum guide outlined oral communication skills to be covered, emphasis seemed to be directed toward other facets of the language arts program. As a result, many teachers often neglected the inclusion of public speaking skills as a regular part of their language arts curriculum.

Another important contributing factor stemmed from the influence of various dialects used by the students. In a multicultural society, it is not unusual to experience the presence of dialects of English that vary from standard American English. Some of the students who spoke in these different dialects exhibited reluctance to make oral presentations. On the other hand, many who spoke a different dialect had no inhibitions at all about speaking publicly

but encountered situations in which syntactical and grammatical differences between their dialect and standard American English created problems.

The time of early adolescence is a period in which many physiological changes in the body begin. As a result, some students experienced a faltering sense of self-confidence and low self-esteem. This feeling greatly eroded the desire to express themselves orally in a public setting.

Finally, many students failed to see the relevancy of public speaking skills to their lives. Often, the problems of unstable home environments or other distractions took the attention, energy, and enthusiasm of children away from learning those basic skills that could help pave the way to their future success and well-being.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

To provide a point of reference for the problem of poor self-confidence, clarity, and fluency in the public speaking skills of seventh grade students, Galvin, Cooper, and Gordon (1988) define the concept of public speaking as the process of one person communicating an oral message to an audience.

In establishing a historical context for the art of public speaking, Prentice and Payne (1989) trace the study

of speech and the development of rhetoric to the classical cultures of Greece and Rome. These two authors also state that the Greek philosopher Aristotle devised the form of rhetorical analysis that serves as the foundation for contemporary public speaking. This concept includes the elements of situation, purpose, audience, and method.

According to Newcombe (1988), every speech must have one of the following purposes: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, or to inspire. Some presentations might have multiple purposes with one main idea accompanied by secondary themes. Once the purpose has been decided, Prentice and Payne (1989) state that the following five canons of classical rhetoric must be considered:

1. Invention - the identification and selection of information sources
2. Organization - the logical arrangement of ideas
3. Style - the appropriate use of language
4. Delivery - the use of gestures and voice
5. Memory - the memorization of what is to be presented.

In surveying the trends of education, Fitzgerald (1989) points out that the last two centuries have seen a gradual decline in the importance placed upon teaching oral communication skills. Rubin (1985) reports that efforts to reverse this trend by placing greater emphasis upon speaking and listening skills have been sanctioned by Congress, the

National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Education Commission of the States, and many state and local agencies. However, a 1983 survey showed that only twenty-three states had speaking and listening objectives in their curricula, and these guidelines are sparsely implemented in the elementary and middle grades of many local school systems at the present time.

Glatthorn (1988) supports the argument that the language curricula of many schools are severely out of balance as they slight oral communication skills in favor of reading and writing instruction. According to Plourde (1986), the average elementary and middle grade student spends sixty percent of his time listening to others. With additional hours needed for assignments and activities, little time is left for the study of oral communication.

From the literature review, one may ascertain that problems in oral communication skills might arise from several possible sources. These include the lack of consistent instruction in speaking skills in many schools, differences in regional and cultural dialects, low self-esteem in some students, and the failure of students to see the relevance of these skills to their lives.

One of the most important contributors to the problem of poor public speaking skills among seventh grade students is the fact that these skills have not been taught on a

regular basis. According to Pope and Kutiper (1989), speaking and listening instruction often gets cast aside as a result of emphasis on reading and writing skills. Robbins (1988) affirms that oral communication skills have been slighted in preparing many students for the work force. In addition, Becker (1990) states that a recent national survey by Johns Hopkins University Center for Research in Elementary and Middle Schools found that routine drill-and-practice activities were used twice as often as oral communication activities in middle grade English classes. In agreement is Johnson (1989) who supports the charge that development of the voice and public speaking skills are not taught in a consistent manner in many elementary and middle school language arts classes.

Another cause of the problem is suggested by MacNeil (1988) who contends that many people have a negative image of others as a result of differences in regional or cultural dialects. Williford (1988) affirms the existence of petty judgments of others by the dialect of their speech. According to Shuy (1967), not only linguistic problems but social problems as well come from misunderstanding of different dialects. Labov (1981) states that many problems in teaching students who speak a nonstandard dialect arise from the failure of the teacher to understand the students' language and the failure of the students to understand the teacher's language.

Bowman (1989) reminds educators that language is a direct product of one's culture. When teachers and students from different cultures do not understand or respect the others' heritage, instructional problems in the language arts might arise.

According to Robbins (1988), standard English is required in the business world. By avoiding the controversy of standard versus nonstandard dialects, many students have been poorly prepared for career advancement by not being taught to use standard English in their oral communication skills. Sledd (1986) affirms this premise by stating that it is unfair to demand students to demonstrate a mastery of standard English in the work force when they have had no instruction to help them gain command of the dialect.

In relating dialect to self-esteem, Roen (1982) advocates that some students who speak nonstandard dialects may feel linguistic insecurity or even linguistic self-hatred as a result of their speech patterns and the reception these dialects have received in the classroom. Thus, the implication is that some nonstandard dialects may inhibit good public speaking skills by creating feelings of poor self-esteem.

In a study of Appalachian dialects, Peterson (1987) states that home and community environments greatly influence children's speech. Often, students from a nonstandard

dialect environment may feel insecure when speaking in the presence of those from other environments. Delpit (1990) supports this idea by stating that students who speak a nonstandard dialect may experience a lack of self-confidence and desire to speak in front of a group as a result of having been made to feel inferior due to their speech.

Newcombe (1988) helps to link self-esteem and public speaking by stressing that the way one feels about himself affects the manner in which he expresses his thoughts. In addition, Rouse (1988) believes that experiences in learning language are directly related to the establishment of identity and self-esteem. In a poll of over three hundred teachers, the editors of Learning (1986) found that seventy-one percent of the teachers encountered problems of withdrawal and unwillingness to speak in some students. According to the poll, poor self-esteem was a major cause of this problem.

A final cause of poor speaking skills gleaned from the literature is that of relevancy. Clark (1988) states that eighty percent of our time is spent in communication. Therefore, students must understand the need for learning effective communication skills to better equip them for successful participation in today's competitive society. Sledd (1986) offers support to the belief that students must see the relevancy of public speaking skills by reminding them that a command of these skills is a definite economic, social, and

political advantage.

While reviewing an opinion poll conducted by Phi Delta Kappa, Spears (1973) reveals that the development of effective speaking skills was a part of the number one goal of education according to responding members. Students and teachers must realize the importance of good speaking skills to successful interaction with society. Becker (1990) believes this can be attained by stressing the importance of giving careful attention to the middle grades curriculum and the instructional methods utilized. Students at this age need to maintain an interest in education and to realize its effects upon their lives.

In stressing the need for making curriculum content relevant to students, Sleeter and Grant (1986) support the case that too many English and language arts teachers structure their classes to be assembly lines instead of laboratories in which students' active participation helps them to grasp the relevancy of communication skills to their lives. Timpson (1988) applies the work of Paulo Freire to making the study of oral communication relevant to students. He advocates Freire's approach of empowering students to be active participants in their own education so that they will see the need for what they are learning.

This interdisciplinary literature review addresses several important aspects of oral communication. The

historical development of public speaking, including the contributions of Greek philosophers to the art of rhetoric, provides a foundation of knowledge and a point of reference for the problem. By including studies of dialects and sociolinguistics, one becomes more aware of the roles that environments play in language development. The role of self-esteem in effective communication holds an important place in the study of speech as it reflects on one's inner self and the outward image projected. Curriculum development is a key issue to be considered while striving to help students understand the relevancy of a speaking skills program to their present and future success.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goal and Expectations

Effective oral communication skills are important characteristics that can be quite beneficial to those aspiring to achieve social, political, and economic success. Therefore, the goal of this practicum was that students in the seventh grade would improve confidence, clarity, and fluency in their public speaking skills.

Behavioral Objectives

The elements of confidence, clarity, and fluency can have dramatic impact on one's effectiveness in oral communication. With this in mind, the writer developed the following three objectives.

1. Thirty-three percent of the students exhibiting self-confidence in their public speaking ability as measured by the problem documentation evaluation will be increased to 60% or more as measured by a final peer review committee evaluation.

2. Thirty-seven percent of the students demonstrating clarity in speaking through clear articulation, strong vocal projection, and suitable rate of speech as measured by the problem documentation evaluation will be increased to 60% or more as measured by a final peer review committee evaluation.

3. Twenty-five percent of the students demonstrating fluency of speech in content, organization, vocabulary, and usage as measured by the problem documentation evaluation will be increased to 60% or more as measured by a final peer review committee evaluation.

Measurement of Objectives

In order to provide documentation for the problem as well as a basis for comparison, the initial public speaking skills of the 115 students involved were evaluated by rotating peer review committees of three students who used the Problem Documentation Evaluation Form (see Appendix A). However, in order to make a summative analysis of the practicum outcomes, a final evaluation of public speaking skills was to be administered for each of the 115 students involved using the Post-Practicum Evaluation Form (see Appendix C).

The first objective was to be measured by the use of rotating peer review committees of three students who would evaluate the self-confidence exhibited by each student while speaking. Evaluators were to use that portion of the form dealing with confidence to record their scores. The average of the three committee members' scores was to be recorded as the final score for the individual student.

To measure the second objective, the rotating peer review committees were to use that portion of the Post-Practicum Evaluation Form related to clarity of speech to record their scores. Again, the average of the three committee members' scores was to be recorded as the final score for the individual student.

Objective three was to be measured by participants'

scores on the fluency section of the Post-Practicum Evaluation Form. Each student was to be evaluated on specific elements of fluency by a three member committee of students. The average of the three scores would determine the final score for each speaker.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Opportunities for speaking or performing in public can be exciting and rewarding experiences. However, the successful execution of these endeavors depends upon sufficient development of the abilities necessary for such activities. These skills may be classified as those that relate to self-confidence, vocal clarity, and fluency. The problem upon which this practicum was based was one of poor self-confidence, clarity, and fluency in public speaking skills as demonstrated by 115 seventh grade students. While searching for a solution to this problem, a review of literature provided many valid techniques for improving oral communication skills.

One possible solution to this problem was to design educational curricula so that consistent instruction in speaking skills is provided throughout the school year in every grade level. According to Backlund (1990), educational curricula should provide supportive environments to help students gain confidence in their oral communication skills so that they might employ these abilities to exert positive influence on the world around them. Backlund advocates

accomplishing this by expanding students' awareness of the following: the effects of oral communication on social systems, the effects of oral communication on self-confidence, and the increased level of content knowledge possible through effective oral communication.

When developing language arts programs, Fitzgerald (1989) suggests making speaking and listening skills central issues of importance. Glatthorn (1988) believes that speaking and listening skills should be included in every English or language arts lesson. In support of this premise, Butler (1986) states that consistent instruction in oral communication should begin in the first grade and maintain a prominent position in a child's education throughout his school years. He believes that these skills should be taught throughout the school year instead of being relegated to an isolated unit of study.

Becker (1990) states that competency in skills is determined by the content of instruction and the way in which the skills are taught. Hudson and Alderman (1988) believe that students need multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of skills. Clear objectives and measurements must be given along with good teacher modeling of expected behaviors and performances.

While planning language arts programs, Spady (1988) advocates use of the Outcome-Based Education paradigm that

focuses on defining specific performance outcomes for students and organizing curricula and instructional practices so that all students may demonstrate mastery of skills. According to Buffington, Curd, and Lunt (1988), the use of Outcome-Based Education has produced positive results in improving speaking skills as well as the other domains of the language arts.

To add final support to the importance of curriculum development to improve speaking skills is Rubin (1985) who believes that oral communication skills can be taught in specialized speech courses as well as infused in other content area classes in an effort to equip students to prevent or resolve conflict in their lives.

Another genre of solution strategies dealt with relevancy. When creating and implementing a speech program, Weinstein, Ridley, Dahl, and Weber (1988) believe that in order to achieve long term application of skills, students must see the personal relevance of these skills to their lives. These educators suggest teaching a variety of specific learning strategies such as elaboration techniques to foster knowledge retention and fluency in communication.

In making an oral communication program relevant, Sleeter and Grant (1986) teach basic speech skills so that students can use them to understand and possibly change circumstances affecting their lives. They teach content

that has relevancy to the lives of their students. Timpson (1988) uses the Paulo Freire approach of actively involving students in the process of learning through incorporating their language and abilities into relevant units of study.

Rouse (1988) has found that in order to achieve the greatest benefit from language training, opportunities must be provided for social interactions that allow students to take responsibility for their self-expression and the manner in which it is executed. This helps to strengthen students' sense of self-identity.

In strengthening language skills and making a connection of relevancy between school and cultural elements of the world, Lubarsky (1987) uses oral history interviews. Landy and Borisoff (1987) advocate using sociodrama, dramatic presentations based on social issues, to help develop speech skills while making a relevant link to the students' world.

A third group of solutions focused on understanding the historical development of one's language so that students may have a better appreciation of their mode of communication. Bowman (1989) believes that one's culture plays a major role in the development of language. Therefore, the curriculum of a language program in a multicultural environment must incorporate an understanding of the

differences between the cultures while utilizing content relevant to all students.

According to Peterson (1987), a study of language and dialects helps to develop student interest by linking language with society and history. MacNeil (1988) agrees by stating that he thinks students should be made aware of the history of their language and why their English might differ in some ways from that of others. In dealing with differences in English usage, Bushman (1989) suggests that the study of geographical and social dialects of English is important to students' understanding and appreciation of different forms of the same language as valid means of communication.

In a study of English and its dialects, Steele (1986) affirms the need to teach standard English usage to all students to use in their best interest but not by demanding that they give up their original speech entirely. According to Brooks (1964), all students can learn to use standard English in given situations. Teaching standard English as a supplement to their original speech will make students bidialectal so that they may use each dialect when it would be to their advantage to do so. In agreement is Alford (1989) who advocates teaching students who speak a nonstandard dialect how to code-switch from their original dialect to standard English and back again according to specific sit-

uations. He reminds educators that dialects are the results of social and geographical environments and do not necessarily measure levels of intelligence.

Robbins (1988) has implemented the study and use of Broadcast English or Media English training to help neutralize regional or cultural dialects through the use of role playing, voice and diction instruction, and video tape analysis of presentations. As one implements this kind of instruction, Williford (1988) reminds educators to not go to extremes in a speech program by trying to drastically change students' accents.

According to Shute (1986), a speech program should focus on the elements of purpose, audience, content, delivery, and evaluation. Therefore, another family of solution strategies should devote attention to organizational techniques. Holmes (1986) affirms the practice of teaching students to use logic and reasoning in the planning and presentation of their speeches. In agreement is Wyatt (1989) who believes that students need to learn how to organize their thoughts in order to be able to express themselves orally. She suggests utilizing the patterns of time structure, space structure, classification, comparison, and cause/effect structure to aid students in speech preparation.

Another method of organization advocated by Thanos and Avadian (1989) is the use of mapping techniques to facilitate

effective preparation and delivery of speeches. These strategies can prove to be advantageous to speakers by providing visual assistance in focusing the mind on the introduction, thesis statement, supporting details, and the conclusion of an oral presentation.

Weber and Weber (1990) affirm the success of teaching students to plan oral presentations using McCarthy's (1990) 4MAT System of organization based on accommodation of different learning styles. By learning to incorporate varied activities and techniques into presentations, students can appeal to the brain hemisphere dominance of their audience thus resulting in greater interest and absorption of the material presented.

Keller (1986) suggests that the cycle of reading, thinking, speaking, listening, discussing, and writing can be used to integrate all the domains of language arts. In an effort to build student interest, MacNeil (1988) believes in stimulating speaking and listening skills through enhancing the pleasure found within the English language itself. He recommends oral reading of English prose and poetry to improve the art of listening while providing examples of fluency that demonstrate how common words may be used in uncommon ways to express thoughts and emotions. In agreement is Frick (1986) who uses storytelling and reading aloud to students to stimulate an interest and acceptance of oral

communication as a pleasurable medium of expression rather than one to be dreaded.

As educators strive to build students' interest in oral communication, Hamilton (1986) outlines the domains of teacher behavior and expectations to be employed. She believes that language arts teachers should model and demand precise oral expression in class to counter the effects of passivity present in many students' verbal skills. Suggested techniques are active conversation, discussion, jokes, and various types of questionning to stimulate growth in oral communication.

Golub and Reid (1989) state that oral communication is vital to individual social development. In order to help students develop and express their thoughts orally, these educators recommend informal discussion, improvisation, and role playing. Wilkinson (1984) supports the use of peer group discussion as an effective builder of verbal skills while promoting good social behavior. Another informal situation that helps students to develop good oral communication skills is offered by Plourde (1986) who uses a conversation corner supplied with discussion topics. Students may feel more comfortable and less threatened by using this type of atmosphere to initially begin their speaking on given topics.

In an effort to help build students' self-esteem,

Cassells (1989) utilizes a classroom activity named Positive Strokes that is a time for students to express positive remarks about each other. Provided are opportunities for increasing self-esteem while practicing speaking and social skills as well. Another useful technique employed by Henderson (1989) is student panel oral presentations that provide opportunities for cooperative work and building students' confidence in their speaking skills.

Yet another aspect of a speech program is that of vocal production. Johnson (1989) believes that students should learn specific strategies for effective use of the voice. She offers techniques for improving pitch, stress, pause, tempo, and emotional expression.

In reviewing oral communication activities for the classroom, Golub (1986) recommends demonstrations, discussions, and storytelling. Medina (1986) affirms utilizing the art of storytelling to enhance a language curriculum by improving fluency of speech. A process-oriented approach to teaching speaking skills is suggested by Goss and Batchelder (1986) who use storytelling to teach a speaking process that can be applied to various situations. Still another important result of storytelling is shared by Schwartz (1989) who states that use of this technique can help middle school students explore who they really are and to establish some sense of personal identity.

The Touchstones Project, developed by Comber, Zeiderman, and Maistrellis (1989), uses discussion classes based upon specially selected texts to promote good speaking and listening abilities. Also in support of this practice is Romano (1986) who integrates speaking skills into lessons so that activities such as debates and discussions become regular parts of classes instead of concentrated units once each year.

Swope (1987) suggests techniques such as solo oral interpretation, storytelling, choral reading, interviewing, discussion, and debate to help develop the elements of speech. Also in favor of these strategies is Ohanian (1985) who advocates the use of interviews on topics of interest such as superstitions to stimulate students' interests in verbal skills.

Another possible solution is offered by Manchey (1986) who believes that valuable interpersonal communication skills can be developed from participation in speech activities such as debate. Further support of debate is provided by VanderStaay (1990) who uses charitable topic appeals to provide opportunities for students to develop skills in analysis, evaluation, and persuasion. He believes that this process helps students to realize that they can make a difference in the world through the power of communication skills.

While considering possible solutions, Yaffe (1989) employs drama in the classroom to make a vital link between subject matter and the lives of the students while improving thinking skills, improvisation abilities, and speaking skills. Also in support of the use of drama is Sheeley (1987) who believes that skills such as diction, projection, and expression may be significantly improved through the use of dramatic presentations. Wagner (1988) reinforces this premise as she discusses the benfits that drama can provide to vocabulary development, fluency of speech, as well as reading and writing skills.

Young (1980) advocates the use of oral history presentations combined with musical selections that are representative of the period or person used as the topic. This can be productive in linking the genres of oral communication, history, music, and the other humanities. An outgrowth of this type of project might be the use of folk legends that deal with various aspects of communities or personalities according to Nicolini (1989) who believes strongly in the use of folklore to develop interest in oral skills. Rathbun (1986) offers assistance to these ideas by suggesting the use of electronic media to stimulate listening, thinking, speaking, and writing skills.

As one surveys all possible solutions to the problem of poor speaking skills, an important final suggestion is offered by Desjardins (1986) who states that students must

be prepared for the job market by addressing oral communication skills needed for such situations as job interviews and on-the-job communication. These skills should be vital elements of any middle and secondary school language program.

Description of Selected Solution

This writer believed that the problem of poor self-confidence, clarity, and fluency in the public speaking skills of seventh grade students could be improved by the development and implementation of a comprehensive program of innovative instructional techniques in oral communication skills. Activities were to be structured so that students' self-confidence was bolstered as they gained better understanding of the history and diversity of their language while applying their new or improved skills to various relevant situations of oral communication.

Initial emphasis was to be placed upon students' understanding of self-esteem and ways that they might help to develop their own sense of a positive self-image as a result of their accomplishments. Realizing that good self-esteem comes with successful attainment of goals, this writer hoped to continue to build upon this foundation throughout the steps of the program's implementation.

An interesting and beneficial method to create interest in the improvement of speaking skills is to study the historical development of the English language. Emphasis was to be placed upon the evolution of the language from early times, various dialects representing the diversity of English, and the constant patterns of change affecting the language.

An important part of any speech program is that which focuses upon vocal production. Students were to learn more about the physiological process of producing speech as they studied the effects of breath control, vocal projection, articulation, and vocal quality. Also included were to be the effects of nonverbal language in communication. Specific characteristics of effective speakers were to be stressed.

Another key element of a program of this nature is organizational skills. Methods such as the 4MAT technique and speech mapping were to be employed.

Although the use of discussion is not a new technique, more detailed use of this method was to help students learn to express their ideas clearly and effectively. Interviews of other people as well as mock job interviews were to be employed. The art of storytelling and its relation to folklore were to add interest to the curriculum by providing students opportunities to relay they own personal stories or those that have special meaning to them.

As the types of activities and presentations were to increase in difficulty, speeches to inform, persuade, and entertain were to be presented. These were to be followed by opportunities for interpretive speaking, debates, and classroom drama focusing on social issues. All of these activities within each class were to be based upon models and strategies of public speaking advocated by such organizations as Toastmasters International and their associate Gavel Clubs. Multiple evaluations were to be done for each student throughout the course of these proceedings. Evaluations were to be done as self-evaluations by the speakers themselves, while some were to be completed by peer review committees of students. Teacher evaluations were to also be included on presentations.

To culminate the implementation period of the practicum, public speaking forums were to be held so that students may have opportunities to make oral presentations both in and out of the classroom environment. These activities were to be designed to fit the requests and interests of the students involved.

This writer believed that a comprehensive program of oral communication skills would be an appropriate solution to the problem for several reasons. First, relevant lessons and activities would provide specific, consistent instruction and feedback on speaking skills to groups and individ-

ual students. Second, opportunities for participation in varied speaking situations would provide excellent chances for learning, practice, and application of specific speaking skills. Finally, a program of this nature would help to equip students with important oral communication skills necessary for their continued educational development as well as their future employment.

Report of Action Taken

During the first month of implementation, this writer chose to strengthen an important foundation of public speaking by emphasizing students' self-esteem. Class discussions and activities were designed to help focus students' attention on positive attributes and characteristics found within each person. Works such as Virginia Satir's "My Declaration of Self-Esteem" and Donna Levine's "You Can Be Whatever You Want to Be" provided themes for lessons. Words were taken from these selections to be used in English classes for spelling and vocabulary development. Another activity employed music to relate self-esteem to the individual students. Recordings of Barry Manilow's "I Made It Through the Rain" and "All the Time" as well as Whitney Houston's "Greatest Love of All" were played for students to interpret. Once they discovered the true meaning of these songs' lyrics,

the participants were eager to discuss self-esteem and to apply these messages to their own positive self-concept.

Another important part of the implementation in the first month was a study of the history and diversity of the English language. The writer believed that students would be more receptive to developing or enhancing their public speaking abilities if they possessed a broader knowledge base about how their language had evolved. The Story of English, a book and video series by McCrum, Cran, and MacNeil (1986), provided intriguing episodes on how our language has developed into such a diverse means of communication throughout the world. A study of American regional and socioeconomic dialects culminated in students utilizing Shuy's (1967) "A Checklist of Regional Expressions" to survey family and community members on different dialects of English spoken throughout the area.

In the second month of implementation, emphasis was placed upon vocal production techniques, nonverbal communication, and characteristics of good speakers. Structured activities provided the students with knowledge and multiple opportunities for application in each of these areas.

The elements of vocal projection and breath control were introduced to the participants by demonstrating breathing and muscular exercises to strengthen abdominal and diaphragmatic support of the voice. Students quickly found that

projecting their voices so that all could hear was much easier with proper support from these muscles.

Good articulation was encouraged through the use of humorous tongue twisters to help students concentrate on correct use of the lips, tongue, and teeth when forming their words. In conjunction with articulation, proper rate of speech was discussed. Demonstrations of different speech rates for different situations and styles of speaking were presented and analyzed according to their varying degrees of effectiveness. The importance of pause was correlated with articulation and rate to provide the students with a useful technique to add dramatic emphasis to oral presentations.

Activities suggested by Johnson (1989) were employed to acquaint students with the elements of pitch, stress, and emotion as related to vocal production. As an experiment with pitch, pairs of cards with words and expressions such as "Now↑"-"Now↓"; "Here↑"-"Here↓"; and "Put it down↑"-"Put it down↓" were flashed to students. An upward arrow meant that the student was to say the word with a final upward inflection as in a question. A downward arrow signified that the student's voice should have a downward inflection as if making a statement. Vocal stress was introduced by using similar cards that had the same sentence written on them twice but with a different word underlined

in each sentence. Students were to place stress upon the underlined word as they spoke each example. An example of these cards follows: "Did you see that movie?"

"Did you see that movie?"

Emotion or expression was explored through the use of cards with sayings accompanied by a list of ways to express each saying. Students were asked to pick cards and demonstrate the various ways of expressing the sayings. An example of these cards follows: "Really" A. I'm bored.

B. I want to hear more!

C. I don't believe it.

Activities combining all of these elements were taken from selected passages of children's literature such as VanWoerkum's (1975) The Queen Who Couldn't Bake Gingerbread and Waber's (1972) Ira Sleeps Over. Students were given copies of the passages and asked to present them to the class as they demonstrated correct use of pitch, stress, and emotion.

To complement the elements of vocal production, the participants of the practicum were introduced to facets of nonverbal communication such as poise, eye contact with the audience, facial expression, gestures, and posture. Examples were given by this writer to demonstrate effective and ineffective uses in each of these categories.

In order to help students assimilate their increased knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication, sessions

that were focused upon characteristics of good speakers were presented. As enrichment material for these lessons, the writer used Malecka's (1982) Tips for Speakers. This publication is an informative poster set with appeal to middle school students. Topics such as "Don't Use Fillers"; "Know Your Audience"; "Conquer Your Props"; "Dress Your Best"; and "Resist Pet Phrases" provided beneficial information to the students as they prepared themselves for public speaking.

With a broad exposure to foundations of verbal and nonverbal communication skills, the participants of the practicum were introduced to speech organization techniques near the end of the second month. Aristotle's four elements of situation, purpose, audience, and method were defined and related to speech organization. The strategies of cluster mapping, speechmapping, and 4MAT speech organization were presented to the students as effective organizational techniques.

The strategy of cluster mapping is not an original idea of the writer but one that he has found to be quite useful in teaching organization of speech and composition. The topic of the speech is placed in the center of the page. Extending out from this hub are various spokes leading to circles containing main points. Supporting details for each point extend outward in smaller circles. As this map of

ideas and supporting information grows, a large cluster of information is created. Next, the clusters of main ideas are numbered so that the speaker can easily see the order in which they are to be presented. The supporting details for each main idea are also numbered in this manner for ease in arranging their presentation.

Thanos and Avadian (1989) designed the technique of speechmapping to provide students with a visual representation that shows the organizational relationship of ideas to each other. This writer demonstrated the three general stages of formulating a thesis statement, establishing and developing major points of the thesis, and incorporating the introduction and conclusion. By using this strategy, students were able to visualize their speech without reading or memorizing the text.

Another organizational method used by the writer was the 4MAT System developed by McCarthy (1990). Students were introduced to the concept of planning an oral presentation based upon the four different learning styles of most audiences. This system utilizes four successive quadrants of activities to engage the whole brain. Quadrant one is used to activate knowledge by getting others interested. Activities might include demonstrations, pictures, or questions. The second quadrant is used to help others gain knowledge by teaching factual information through the

use of lectures, graphics, or examples. Quadrant three allows the audience to use their knowledge by practicing in games, puzzles, worksheets, drills, or hands-on activities. The fourth quadrant provides opportunities for the audience to apply their knowledge by doing something personal with their new information. They might create a skit, cartoon, story, poem, or some link to real life situations.

The third month of implementation began to focus upon students' application of their speaking skills in various domains of public speaking. Class sessions were structured so that tenets of the Toastmasters International meetings were employed. Each class became its own speaking club fashioned after the Toastmasters program that seeks to improve public speaking in its members. Now that students knew the characteristics of good speakers and the elements of good vocal production, they were ready to begin offering their own critiques to each other after their presentations. During some activities, simple oral comments were given to speakers. For most presentations to follow throughout the period of implementation, evaluation forms provided by the writer were used by the students and teacher to provide feedback to each speaker after a presentation was given (see Appendix C). This kind of interaction among the students and teacher continued throughout the remainder of the implementation period in all the domains of public speaking

included in the practicum.

Month three utilized class discussions, interviews, and storytelling to provide opportunities for all students to begin participation in situations that required them to speak publicly before a group of people.

Current news and athletic events as well as relevant social concerns seemed to be logical choices that provided impetus for students to express themselves. As a result, lively class discussions enabled the speakers to practice their skills of oral expression while expounding upon topics of interest and relevance to their lives. Reminders of basic skills such as vocal projection, clear articulation, and the avoidance of fillers were provided by peer students and the writer as needed.

Another type of situation in which participants improved public speaking abilities was the interview. Members of each class volunteered or were chosen to be interviewed by panels of peer students. All class members were involved in the preparation of questions for the panels to ask during each interview. Examples of these questions included the following:

"If you could rule the world, what changes would you make?"

"What do you hope to achieve as an adult?"

"What tangible and intangible things are most important to you?"

Mock job interviews were also used as a helpful and relevant means of improving public speaking. Actual job applications were obtained from local businesses for students to complete. Then, the writer and peer students used the applications to interview participants as if they were actually applying for those positions. On one occasion, an employer from a local business came to do the interviews and to tell students what businesses look for in potential employees.

After students had sharpened their speaking skills in class discussions and interviews, they were introduced to the process of storytelling. Folktales, ghost stories, newspapers, and magazines provided material from which stories were told. Especially interesting to the students were stories compiled by a local author in her book about the folklore of the area. Once students learned that the art of telling a story did not limit them to reading it or telling it the same way each time, they were more eager to try it themselves. Participants were encouraged to explore the school and city libraries for sources of material as well as to create their own. Although some were a bit awkward at first, many proved to be quite enjoyable as they shared from their own experiences, imagination, or selections they had found.

During the fourth month of implementation, emphasis was placed upon speaking to inform, persuade, and entertain. Students were exposed to the characteristics of each of these types of speeches by viewing a series of videos that provided examples and guidelines for their own speech development.

For their first assignment, students prepared and delivered informative speeches on topics of their choice. Each speaker was required to submit a thesis statement that was approved by the writer before the development phase began. Class time was given for research and preparation, although students were expected to complete much of the work outside of class. Once the presentations began, a wide range of informative speeches and demonstrations were presented. These proved to be enjoyable for most of the speakers as well as their audience.

In order to gain experience in persuasive speaking, students were asked to imagine that they held an important position with a major advertising company. Their assignment was to create and present a television commercial that advertised some new, nationally recognized product. All work had to be original, thus no jingles or slogans of existing products were allowed. The speakers were urged to be as creative as their imaginations would allow. Once the presentations began, many of the students suddenly became television personalities in their own minds as they

persuaded their audience to buy their new products.

To gain more experience in persuasive speaking, political speeches from different American statesmen were studied and presented by the participants. Among these selections was Patrick Henry's address to the Virginia House of Burgesses in which he proclaimed, "Give me liberty, or give me death." Another emotionally charged example was Martin Luther King's speech in which he declared, "I have a dream!" After students presented their interpretations of selected examples of famous persuasive speeches, they had to prepare and deliver their own persuasive speeches on topics of social, political, or religious importance to them. The elements of purpose, audience, and situation were reviewed as the students concentrated on sharpening their persuasive tactics.

In order to give students experience in presenting speeches that entertain, practicum participants were asked to prepare and deliver talks about their pet peeves. Students were instructed that they were not to persuade the audience to adopt their pet peeve or to create a comedy routine. Instead, speakers were to simply entertain their listeners by using humorous examples that were not offensive and did not focus upon specific individuals. Students were introduced to numerous books of quotations and speakers' resources to assist them as they searched for topics, intro-

ductions, and conclusions. As a result of most speeches of this nature being relatively short, a time limit of three minutes was put on these assignments.

As in preceeding months, all student presentations made to inform, persuade, or entertain were evaluated by committees of peers as well as this writer. All evaluations were completed by using the Post Practicum Evaluation Form (see Appendix C).

Months five and six provided time for students to strengthen their oral communication skills as they gained experience in the areas of interpretive speaking, debate, and drama. Prior to initial assignments in these domains, elements of vocal production and expression were reviewed as their importance was linked to these areas of speech.

To introduce interpretive speaking to the practicum participants, the writer presented examples ranging from humorous to dramatic content as he demonstrated application of vocal production techniques to the interpretation of poetry, prose, and speeches. Next, students were assisted in searches for selections appropriate for their purposes, tastes, and abilities. A wealth of literature was found in books of oral interpretation, speech texts, materials from libraries, and the writer's personal collection. Some of the speakers' selections included the following:

"Jabberwocky" - Lewis Carroll; "Is There a Santa Claus?" - Francis Church; "Jest 'fore Christmas" - Eugene Field; "Seein' Things" - Eugene Field; "A Visit from St. Nicholas" - Clement Moore; "Casey at the Bat" - Ernest Thayer; "Eulogy of the Dog" - George Vest; "Give Me Liberty, or Give Me Death" - Patrick Henry; portions of "The Declaration of Independence;" "O Captain! My Captain!" - Walt Whitman; "I Am an American" - Elias Lieberman; "The New Colossus" - Emma Lazarus; "I Believe" - John D. Rockefeller, Jr.; "Money" - Richard Armour; "Beat! Beat! Drums!" - Walt Whitman; "How Do I Love Thee?" - Elizabeth Barrett Browning; "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" - Walt Whitman; "When I Was Purple" - Teri Gamble; selections from Exodus - Leon Uris; portions of A Christmas Carol - Charles Dickens; selections from In Black and White - Ann Jones; portions of Look Homeward, Angel - Thomas Wolfe; "The Owl Who Was God" - James Thurber; "The Waltz" - Dorothy Parker; "Snake Dance" - Corey Ford; "The Raven" - Edgar Allan Poe; "Mother to Son" - Langston Hughes; "The Emperor's New Clothes" - Hans Christian Andersen; "Macavity, The Mystery Cat" - T. S. Eliot; "The Wearin' o' the Green" - Anonymous; "On Woman's Right to Suffrage" - Susan B. Anthony; "I Have a Dream" - Martin Luther King, Jr.; portions of "Ecclesiastes" from the Bible; "I Hear America Singing" - Walt Whitman; "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" - Charles Schulz; and God's Trombones - James

Weldon Johnson.

Also during this time, students were introduced to the fundamentals of debate as a concept of affirmative and negative teams that compete while stating and defending their positions on given propositions. The terms affirmative, negative, proposition, and rebuttal were defined, and examples were given for each. Student teams were selected in each class to debate topics chosen from current events and social issues. Propositions were stated, thus providing the impetus for team research and preparation to begin. Once prepared, teams gained forensic experience as they debated their issues in class with their peers serving as audiences and evaluators.

Another domain explored was that of drama. Each English class became its own troupe of actors as short skits, comedy scripts, and sketches were used to build self-esteem while providing experience in acting. Students explored techniques of vocal production combined with drama as they made various characters and situations come alive in the classroom. Sociodrama was also employed to focus students' attention on relevant social issues. Once issues were selected, appropriate roles were identified that related to the chosen topics. Next, students researched and interviewed community members to gain insight on how people in these real situations responded to certain issues. During class presentations, students assumed these various roles to portray their characters'

reactions to the chosen issues. Speakers were encouraged to make their characters more realistic by using drama as well as appropriate speech characteristics such as dialect and accent.

The implementation of the practicum was concluded in months seven and eight with public speaking forums. These sessions were structured so that students selected their own domains of public speaking from the various types that were studied during preceding months. This approach seemed to promote motivation within the students as they exercised freedom to select their own type of public speaking. Speeches to inform, persuade, and entertain were presented as were selections of interpretive speaking, drama, and stories.

In order to determine if practicum objectives had been met, final evaluations of all students were completed. Committees of peer students and the writer administered summative evaluations through use of the Post Practicum Evaluation Form (see Appendix C).

Those students who had demonstrated mastery of confidence, clarity, and fluency in their public speaking abilities were encouraged to seek speaking opportunities outside the classroom environment. Some became involved in school Drama Club activities, while others were able to make oral presentations at church, civic, and community events as they gained more expertise in utilizing their oral communication

skills. When possible, the writer attended these events to support, coach, and evaluate the students as they applied their more highly developed abilities of speaking with confidence, clarity, and fluency in a public situation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

In order to determine the degree to which the three practicum objectives had been met, the results of the final evaluations were compared to those administered prior to the practicum proceedings. This comparison showed that all objectives had been achieved.

To determine the achievement of objective one, at least sixty percent of the students must have received an average score of Good or Excellent on the Confidence section of the Post Practicum Evaluation Form as scored by peer committees of students and this writer. The results of these evaluations are presented in Table 2.

Objective two required sixty percent or more of the students to receive an average score of Good or Excellent on the Clarity section of the Post Practicum Evaluation Form as scored by peer committees of students and this writer. These results are also presented in Table 2.

The third objective required sixty percent or more of the students to receive an average score of Good or Excellent on the Fluency section of the Post Practicum Evaluation Form as scored by peer committees of students and this writer.

The results of these evaluations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Students Demonstrating Good or Excellent Speaking Abilities

Trait	Pre Practicum	Post Practicum
Exhibits self-confidence when speaking to an audience	33%	88%
Clearly articulates and projects the voice at a suitable rate of speech	37%	91%
Demonstrates fluency in content, organization, vocabulary, and usage	25%	82%

Conclusions

Effective public speaking abilities are important assets that can be beneficial in social, economic, and political realms. In order for students to excel in areas of public speaking so that they may use their oral communication skills

to their advantage, they must be properly trained. Therefore, the goal of this practicum was for students in the seventh grade to improve confidence, clarity, and fluency in their public speaking skills. As a result of the three behavioral objectives being met and surpassed, one may conclude that the goal of the practicum was attained.

Objective one was concerned with strengthening students' self-confidence in themselves and their abilities to express their ideas and emotions orally before an audience. The final comparison of pre practicum and post practicum results showed that eighty-eight percent of the students received either a Good or Excellent summative score in this domain. This was a substantial gain in the number of participants who exhibited improved self-confidence when speaking. The implication is that if students are carefully guided through development of speaking techniques and are given multiple opportunities for practice and application in a nonthreatening environment, they will feel more comfortable with public speaking as they achieve success in their efforts.

The aim of the second objective was for students to address an audience in a manner of speaking that was clearly articulated, well-projected, and executed at a suitable rate of speech. A significant increase was reflected in the comparison of the pre practicum scores and those of the post practicum evaluation. Ninety-one percent of the students

received a final score of Good or Excellent. The implication may be made that instruction in specific elements of vocal production followed by multiple opportunities to apply new skills can greatly improve students' abilities in articulation, projection, and rate of speech.

The third objective required an increase in the number of students who demonstrated good or excellent fluency in content, organization, vocabulary, and usage when speaking to an audience. Eighty-two percent of the participants received a final average score of Good or Excellent when summative evaluations were made. The implication of these results is that consistent training, application of learned skills, and constructive evaluation can help speakers to become more fluent in their public speaking abilities.

In conclusion, the design of this practicum and its positive results proved that a comprehensive program of innovative instructional techniques can improve the level of effectiveness attained by students who are learning to become better public speakers.

Recommendations

The writer has three recommendations for others who are interested in promoting public speaking programs within educational settings. First, in order for any real success

to be accomplished, instruction should be provided in a regular and consistent manner throughout the school year. It is the belief of this writer that every language arts and English teacher should receive specific training in methods and materials of teaching public speaking. Following this training, these teachers should incorporate these skills into their curricula as major components of language arts instruction. Second, anyone who teaches oral communication skills serves as a role model. Therefore, it is important for the instructor to realize the impact that his personal examples may have upon those he teaches. The teacher must be adept in the skills himself as he conveys knowledge through personal application of techniques. Finally, a variety of strategies must be presented to satisfy the needs and interests of different students. When searching for materials and ideas, this writer found the many related publications of the National Council of Teachers of English to be of great worth in the development of instructional activities for the program implemented in this practicum.

Dissemination

This practicum and its results are to be shared in three ways. First, the school in which the writer teaches recently identified and listed the need for a consistent program of

speech instruction to be included in the five year developmental plan to maintain school accreditation. Therefore, as Chairman of the school's English Department, this writer will provide staff development for language arts and English teachers as this program is developed. Second, the writer plans to incorporate portions of this practicum into a Methods and Materials of Middle School Language Arts course that he is scheduled to teach for a local college teacher training program. Third, the writer will be available to other teachers, schools, and systems as a resource person to assist in the development of public speaking curricula.

REFERENCES

References

Alford, K. C. (1989). Who's zoomin' who?: Black English in the classroom. Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 5(2), 47-53.

Backlund, P. (1990). Oral activities in the English classroom. In S. Hynds & D. L. Rubin (Eds.), Perspectives on talk and learning (pp. 227-244). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Becker, H. J. (1990). Curriculum and instruction in middle grade schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 71, 450-457.

Bowman, B. T. (1989). Educating language-minority children: Challenges and opportunities. Phi Delta Kappan, 71, 118-120.

Brooks, C. K. (1964). In W. A. Stewart (Ed.), Nonstandard speech and the teaching of English (pp. 25-32). Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Buffington, M., Curd, B., & Lunt, O. (1988). Organizing for results in high school English. Educational Leadership, 46(2), 9-11.

Bushman, J. H. (1989). Exploring the geographical dialects of English. Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 5(2), 54-61.

Butler, G. R. (1986). Speaking skills: A few tips from an old timer. The Leaflet (Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English), 85(1), 2-7.

Cassells, A. L. (1989). Positive strokes: An affective oral language activity. In P. Phelan (Ed.), Talking to learn (pp. 140-143). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Clark, R. W. (1988). Effective speech. Mission Hills, CA: Glencoe.

Comber, G., Zeiderman, H., & Maistrellis, N. (1989). The Touchstones Project: Discussion classes for students of all abilities. Educational Leadership, 46(6), 39-42.

Delpit, L. D. (1990). Language diversity and learning. In S. Hynds & D. L. Rubin (Eds.), Perspectives on talk and learning (pp. 247-266). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Desjardins, L. A. (1986). Speech and technical writing: A combined approach. The Leaflet (Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English), 85(1), 14-21.

Family problems: How they're affecting classrooms today. (1986, January). Learning, pp. 34-39.

Fitzgerald, S. (1989). Taking stock: Language arts at the beginning of the nineties. Language Arts Journal of Michigan, 5(2), 1-12.

Frick, H. A. (1986). The value of sharing stories orally with middle grade students. Journal of Reading, 29, 300-303.

Galvin, K. M., Cooper, P. J., & Gordon, J. M. (1988). The basics of speech. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

Glatthorn, A. A. (1988). What schools should teach in the English language arts. Educational Leadership, 46(1), 44-50.

Golub, J. (1986). Speech communication: The English teacher's responsibility. English Journal, 75(5), 16.

Golub, J., & Reid, L. (1989). Activities for an interactive classroom. English Journal, 78(4), 43-48.

Goss, A., & Batchelder, M. (1986). Storytelling: A process-oriented approach to speaking skills. The Leaflet (Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English), 85(1), 8-13.

Hamilton, A. J. (1986). Challenging verbal passivity. The Leaflet (Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English), 85(1), 22-23.

Henderson, B. R. (1989). Student panel presentations: A collaborative oral exercise. In P. Phelan (Ed.), Talking to learn (pp. 105-108). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Holmes, P. (1986). Speech communication: The English teacher's responsibility. English Journal, 75(5), 19.

Hudson, T., & Alderman, M. K. (1988). Increasing success in the middle grades. English Journal, 77(1), 86-87.

Johnson, C. S. (1989). Strategies for developing effective use of the voice. In P. Phelan (Ed.), Talking to learn (pp. 75-80). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Keller, R. D. (1986). The rhetorical cycle: Reading, thinking, speaking, listening, discussing, writing. The Leaflet (Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English), 85(1), 27-32.

Labov, W. (1981). The study of nonstandard English. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Landy, R. J., & Borisoff, D. J. (1987). Reach for speech: Communication skills through sociodrama. English Journal, 76(5), 68-71.

Lubarsky, N. (1987). A glance at the past, a glimpse of the future. Journal of Reading, 30, 520-529.

MacNeil, R. (1988). Listening to our language. English Journal, 77(6), 16-21.

Malecka, J. (1982). Tips for speakers. Portland, ME: J. Weston Walch.

Manchey, T. (1986). The English teacher as debate coach. English Journal, 75(1), 46-48.

McCarthy, B. (1990). Using the 4MAT system to bring learning styles to schools. Educational Leadership, 48(2), 31-37.

McCrum, R., Cran, W., & MacNeil, R. (1986). The story of English. New York, NY: Viking Penguin.

Medina, E. B. (1986, October). Enhance your curriculum through storytelling. Learning, pp. 58-61.

Newcombe, P. J. (1988). Communication: An introduction to speech. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Nicolini, M. B. (1989). Is there a FOAF in your future? Urban folk legends in Room 112. English Journal, 78(8), 81-84.

Ohanian, S. (1985, November). Developing verbal skills with superstitions. Learning, pp. 39-40.

Peterson, B. (1987). Why they talk that talk: Language in Appalachian studies. English Journal, 76(6), 53-56.

Plourde, L. (1986, July). Getting kids to be better. Learning, pp. 44-45.

Pope, C. A., & Kutiper, K. L. (1989). Speaking and listening: The "other" language arts? English Journal, 78(2), 81-82.

Prentice, D., & Payne, J. (1989). Public speaking today. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

Rathbun, L. (1986). Using television and radio in English classes. English Journal, 75(8), 62-63.

Robbins, J. F. (1988). Employers' language expectations and nonstandard dialect speakers. English Journal, 77(6), 22-24.

Roen, D. H. (1982). Teaching sociolinguistic differences in the language arts classroom. In C. Carter (Ed.), Non-native and nonstandard dialect students (pp. 85-88). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Romano, A. (1986). Speech communication: The English teacher's responsibility. English Journal, 75(5), 18.

Rouse, J. (1988). Language learning and identity. English Journal, 77(2), 22-28.

Rubin, D. L. (1985). Instruction in speaking and listening: Battles and options. Educational Leadership, 42(5), 31-36.

Schwartz, M. (1989). Storytelling: A way to look deeper. English Journal, 78(1), 42-46.

Sheeley, S. L. (1987). Drama: A junior high elective. English Journal, 76(5), 66-67.

Shute, S. (1986). The English teacher as speech teacher. English Journal, 75(1), 32-34.

Shuy, R. W. (1967). Discovering American dialects. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Sledd, J. (1986). A basic incompetence in the defining of basic competencies. English Journal, 75(7), 26-28.

Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (1986). Success for all students. Phi Delta Kappan, 68, 297-299.

Spady, W. G. (1988). Organizing for results: The basis of authentic restructuring and reform. Educational Leadership, 46(2), 4-8.

Spears, H. (1973). Kappans ponder the goals of education. Phi Delta Kappan, 55, 29-32.

Steele, C. (1986). Speech communication: The English teacher's responsibility. English Journal, 75(5), 17.

Swope, J. W. (1987). Opportunities for classroom performance. English Journal, 76(3), 98-99.

Thanos, M., & Avadian, B. (1989). Speechmapping: Navigating through speech preparation and delivery. In P. Phelan (Ed.), Talking to learn (pp. 88-97). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Timpson, W. M. (1988). Paulo Freire: Advocate of literacy through liberation. Educational Leadership, 45(5), 62-66.

VanderStaay, S. (1990). Charitable topics: Research, writing, and speaking. English Journal, 79(3), 52-54.

VanWoerkum, D. (1975). The queen who couldn't bake gingerbread. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Waber, B. (1972). Ira sleeps over. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Wagner, B. J. (1988). Research currents: Does classroom drama affect the arts of language? Language Arts, 65(1), 46-52.

Weber, P., & Weber, F. (1990). Using 4MAT to improve student presentations. Educational Leadership, 48(2), 41-46.

Weinstein, C. E., Ridley, D. S., Dahl, T., & Weber, E. S. (1988). Helping students develop strategies for effective learning. Educational Leadership, 46(4), 17-19.

Wilkinson, L. C. (1984). Research currents: Peer group talk in elementary school. Language Arts, 61(2), 164-169.

Williford, D. (1988). A pin is not a pen; Is a pan? Is Southern pronunciation incorrect? English Journal, 77(6), 25-28.

Wyatt, N. (1989). Structuring speaking and listening in the classroom. In P. Phelan (Ed.), Talking to learn (pp. 113-116). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Yaffe, S. H. (1989). Drama as a teaching tool. Educational Leadership, 46(6), 29-32.

Young, A. (1980). Oral history: A popular research technique that can work in music classes. Music Educators' Journal, 67(3), 52-55.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION EVALUATION FORM

Problem Documentation Evaluation Form

Speaker_____ Topic_____

Evaluate each item by circling the appropriate number.

	Poor		Excellent
CONFIDENCE			
Poise and self-control	1	2	3
Eye contact with audience	1	2	3
Facial expression	1	2	3
Gestures	1	2	3
Posture	1	2	3
CLARITY			
Articulation	1	2	3
Vocal projection	1	2	3
Rate of speech	1	2	3
FLUENCY			
Effective introduction, body, and conclusion	1	2	3
Clear, logical order	1	2	3
Smooth transitions	1	2	3
Appropriate vocabulary and expression	1	2	3

APPENDIX B

WRITER'S MONTHLY LOG

Writer's Monthly Log

Student_____ Month_____

Instructional content:

Student application of content:

Positive results:

Negative results:

APPENDIX C

POST-PRACTICUM EVALUATION FORM

Post-Practicum Evaluation Form

Speaker_____ Topic_____

Evaluate each item by circling the appropriate number.

	Poor	Good	Excellent
CONFIDENCE			
Poise and self-control	1	2	3
Eye contact with audience	1	2	3
Facial expression	1	2	3
Gestures	1	2	3
Posture	1	2	3
SCORE			
CLARITY			
Articulation	1	2	3
Vocal projection	1	2	3
Rate of speech	1	2	3
SCORE			
FLUENCY			
Effective introduction, body, and conclusion	1	2	3
Clear, logical order	1	2	3
Smooth transitions	1	2	3
Appropriate vocabulary and expression	1	2	3
SCORE			